

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Final Regulations for Amendment 8 to the Fishery Management Plan for Coral, Coral Reefs, and Live/Hardbottom Habitats of the South Atlantic Region (Coral Amendment 8).**

**July 2015**

#### **What does Coral Amendment 8 do?**

- Coral Amendment 8 extends protections for deepwater coral ecosystems by expanding the boundaries of the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, and the Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.
- Coral Amendment 8 also implements a transit provision through Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern for fishing vessels with rock shrimp onboard.

#### **Why is Coral Amendment 8 necessary?**

- Recent scientific explorations have identified areas of hard bottom habitat including deep water coral outside the boundaries of the existing Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern and Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.
- The expansion extends current gear prohibitions to these newly identified areas to enhance protection for deepwater coral.
- The modifications to the transit provisions would allow rock shrimp fishermen to access additional rock shrimp fishing grounds in less time using less fuel than if the fishermen were required to travel around the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern.

#### **Where can I find the coordinates of the revised Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern?**

- Maps and coordinates of the revised Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern can be found on our website at:  
[http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps\\_gis\\_data/fisheries/s\\_atlantic/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/maps_gis_data/fisheries/s_atlantic/index.html).

#### **What gear is prohibited in the habitat areas of particular concern?**

- In the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, the use of bottom longline, bottom trawl, dredge, pot or trap is prohibited. If aboard a fishing vessel; anchor, use of anchor and chain, and grapple and chain is prohibited.
- In addition to the gear listed above, mid-water trawl is also prohibited in Stetson-Miami Terrace and Cape Lookout Coral Habitat Areas of Particular Concern.

### **What is the transit provisions through Oculina Bank?**

- To be exempted from the prohibition on possessing rock shrimp in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, a vessel must have a valid commercial permit for rock shrimp.
- Vessels in the area with rock shrimp onboard, are required to maintain a direct and non-stop continuous course through the area at a minimum speed of 5 knots. The speed is determined by a vessel monitoring system approved for the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery. The vessel monitoring system would be required to ping (signal) at a rate of 1 ping per 5 minutes.
- Vessels with rock shrimp onboard in Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern are required to stow gear appropriately with doors and nets out of water and either onboard the deck or below the deck of the vessel.

### **When are the regulations effective?**

- The regulations are effective on August 17, 2015.

### **Where can I find more information about the amendment?**

- Contact NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
  - By Mail:  
Southeast Regional Office, c/o Karla Gore  
263 13th Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
  - By FAX: (727) 824-5308
  - By Phone: (727) 824-5305
- Coral Amendment 8 is available on line at: NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office Web site: [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable\\_fisheries/s\\_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sustainable_fisheries/s_atl/coral/2014/am8/index.html) or, the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Web site: <http://www.safmc.net/>.